

X

CONCERNING A BATTLE THAT THE SPANIARDS FOUGHT WITH THE INDIANS OF THE COAST

As we said, the Spaniards spent three days in repairing their caravels and in recovering their own strength, their chief need being for sleep, as they were very fatigued. On the last day, after noon, they saw seven canoes emerge from among some rushes and come toward them. In the first one came an Indian as large as a Philistine and as black as an Ethiopian, very different in color and appearance from those that they had left in the interior.

The reason why the coast Indians are so black is because they constantly go about in the salt water fishing, for because of the sterility of the country they depend upon fishing for their subsistence. The heat of the sun also helps to make them black, as it is more intense on the coast than in the interior. Standing in the bow of his canoe, the Indian said to the Castilians in a gruff and haughty voice: "Thieves, vagabonds, idlers without honor or shame, who go along this shore disturbing its natives, you are to leave this place immediately by one of those two mouths of this river, if you do not want me to kill all of you and burn your boats. See that I do not find you here tonight, or not a man of you will escape with his life."

They could understand what the Indian said by the gestures that he made with his arms and his body, pointing to the two mouths of the Río Grande that the island formed, which we said was ahead of them, and by many words that the Spaniards' Indian servants explained. Having said this, he went back into the rushes without waiting for a reply.

Here Juan Coles adds the following words that the Indian spoke, besides those already given: "If we had large canoes like yours (he meant the ships), we would follow you to your country and take it, for we also are men like you."

The Spaniards, having considered the Indian's words and the arrogance that he had shown in them and in his appearance, and seeing that canoes appeared from time to time among the rushes and then went back, as if they were in ambush, agreed that it would be a good thing to make the Indians understand that they were not afraid of them, so that they would not be encouraged to come and shoot arrows at them and set fire to the caravels. They could do this better at night than in the daytime, being a people who

were well acquainted with the sea and the land thereabouts and who could attack and run away safely, while the Castilians were ignorant of it.

Having so decided, a hundred men entered the five canoes that remained for the service of the brigantines, and, taking Gonzalo Silvestre and Alvaro Nieto as commanders, they went in search of the Indians. They found large numbers of them behind some rushes, ready with more than sixty small canoes that they had brought together against our men.

The latter, although they saw so many Indians and canoes, were not dismayed, but on the contrary they engaged them with all good spirit and courage. By good fortune they capsized three canoes in the first encounter, wounded many Indians, and killed ten or twelve, because they carried twenty-two crossbowmen and three archers. One of these was a Spaniard who had lived in England from infancy to the age of twenty years, and the other was a native Englishman. Being skillful with the weapons of that kingdom and expert in the use of bows and arrows, they had been unwilling to use any other arms except these throughout the discovery, and thus they were carrying them on this occasion. The other archer was an Indian who had been the servant of Captain Juan de Guzmán, having been captured soon after he entered La Florida. He had become so fond of his master and of the Spaniards that he always fought with his bow and arrows as one of them against his own people.

With the skill and dexterity of the marksmen and with the courage of the whole party, they scattered the enemy canoes and made them run away. But our men did not come out of the battle so well that most of them were not wounded, the two captains among them. One Spaniard was wounded by a weapon that the Castilians in the Indies call a long arrow [*tiradera*], which we shall call more accurately a dart [*bohordo*] because it is shot with a strip [*amiento*] of wood or a cord.⁴⁶ The Spaniards had not seen this weapon in all the places they had been in La Florida until that day. In El Perú the Indians use it a great deal. It is a weapon a fathom long made of a firm rush, though spongy in the center, of which they also make arrows. They make heads for them of deer horn, fashioned in all perfection with four points or harpoons of palm or other wood that they have, as strong and heavy as iron. So that the part of the arrow or dart made of the rush will not be split by the barb when it hits its mark, they make a knot where the head or harpoon joins it, and another one at the other end, which the crossbowmen call *batalla* on

⁴⁶This weapon was a spear thrower, or atlatl, primarily used by coastal natives of the Southeast during the early historic era.

their darts, where it receives the cord of the bow or the stock with which they shoot it. The stock is of wood two tercias long, and they shoot the dart with it with extreme force, so that it has been known to pass through a man armed in a coat of mail. The Spaniards in El Perú feared this weapon more than any other the Indians had, for their arrows were not so terrible as those of La Florida.

The dart or long arrow with which they wounded our Spaniard of whom we were speaking had three barbs in the place of one, similar to the three largest fingers of the hand. The barb in the center was a handbreadth longer than the two on the sides, and thus it went through the thigh from one side to the other. The two side barbs were lodged in the middle of the thigh, and in order to get them out, it was necessary to cut away a great deal of flesh from the poor Spaniard's leg, because they were harpoons and not smooth points. The butchery was such that he expired before they dressed his wound, the poor fellow not knowing whether to complain more of the enemy who had wounded him or of the friends who had hastened his death.

XI

THE SPANIARDS SET SAIL, AND THE INCIDENTS OF THE FIRST TWENTY-THREE DAYS OF THEIR NAVIGATION

Since we have not yet left the Río Grande, whose canoes we have described at length in the past chapters, it will be well to tell here of the dexterity and skill that the natives of the whole country of La Florida show in righting a canoe when it is turned bottom up in naval battles or in their fishing or in some other manner; we neglected to note this in the proper place. In such cases, since they are most expert swimmers, they take it between twelve or thirteen Indians, more or less, according to the size of the canoe, and again set it right side up. As it comes up full of water, all the Indians together tilt the canoe to one side, the water thus beginning to run out in that direction, and then they quickly tilt it to the opposite side, thus throwing the water out, so that after two such movements not a drop of water remains in the canoe, and the Indians again get into it. They do all this so quickly and easily that the canoe has scarcely capsized when they have it righted again. Our men admired this skill greatly, for however they tried they never managed to imitate it.

While the hundred Spaniards went in the canoes to fight the Indians, those who remained loaded the caravels with the things that they had taken out of them. They could do so without the aid of the canoes because the brigantines were tied up to the driftwood that we said formed an island, which made no other movement except to rise and fall with the motion of the sea.

The Spaniards who had gone to the fight came back to their people victorious, having driven the enemy out of the rushes, but fearing that they might return at night and set fire to them or do some other damage, they all embarked in the caravels and went to the uninhabited island at the mouth of the Río Grande. They anchored and went ashore, and walked over all of it, but found nothing remarkable there.

That night they slept in the anchored caravels, and at daylight they decided to set sail and go toward the west in the direction of the coast of México, always keeping the mainland of La Florida to their right, not drawing away from it. When they hoisted the anchors one of the cables broke; as it had been repaired in many places, very little was needed to break it. The anchor was lost, as they had not thrown out a buoy, and since it was so necessary to them, they did not wish to go without it. The best swimmers among them went into the water, but all their efforts to find it were of no avail until three o'clock in the afternoon, when they found it at the end of nine or ten hours of diving.

At that hour they set sail. They did not dare go out into the gulf because they did not know where they were or in what direction to sail in order to cross to the islands of Santo Domingo or Cuba, as they had no sailing chart or compass or astrolabe with which to take the altitude of the sun, nor a forestaff for finding that of the north star. They only knew that by constantly following the coast toward the west they must eventually reach the coast and territory of México. With this purpose they navigated all that evening and the following night, and until nearly sunset of the second day. In all that distance they found fresh water from the Río Grande, and our people were amazed that it should be found so far out at sea.

At this point Alonso de Carmona says the following, which is copied literally:

Thus we navigated, following the coast more or less closely, for the Indians had burned our instruments of navigation, or we ourselves had done so, when we set fire to Maubila. Captain Juan de Añasco was a very careful man and he had recovered the astrolabe and kept it. As it was of metal it had not been

much damaged. He made a sailing chart on a piece of deerskin and fashioned a forestaff from a ruler, and we set course by it. The mariners and others with them who knew that he was not a seaman and had never been at sea in his life until he embarked for this journey ridiculed him, and when he learned how they were jeering at him he threw all the instruments except the astrolabe into the sea. Another brigantine that was coming behind picked them up because the chart and the forestaff were fastened together. Thus we traveled, or rather navigated, seven or eight days, when we took shelter from a storm in a cove.

Thus far Alonso de Carmona.

Our Castilians navigated fifteen days more with good weather for their voyage, without anything of note happening except that during these fifteen days they went ashore five times to get water. They had no large vessels in which to carry it, only small jars and pitchers that were soon emptied. This was one of the chief causes, along with the lack of navigating instruments, for their not having dared to cross to the islands or to separate themselves from the mainland, because they needed water every three days.

When they found no river or spring from which to take it they dug in the ground ten or twelve paces from the sea and found at a depth of less than a vara a plentiful supply of fresh water. Thus they were never without water throughout their voyage.

At the end of the fifteen days of navigation they reached a place where there were four or five islets not far from the mainland, where they found innumerable waterfowl. These bred there and had their nests on the ground, and they were so numerous and so close together that our men could not find a place to set foot. When they returned to the brigantines they were loaded down with eggs and with fledglings, which were so fat that they could not eat them. Both they and the eggs tasted very much like fish.

On the following day they anchored to take water on a very pleasant beach that was clear of rushes, there being on it only many large trees separated from one another, which formed a beautiful open forest without shrubs or any kind of undergrowth.

Some of the Spaniards went ashore to gather shellfish on the beach, and they found there some slabs of black bitumen almost like pitch, which the sea washed up among its refuse. It might have come from some fountain of that liquid that entered the sea or had its origin in it. The slabs weighed eight, ten, twelve, or fourteen pounds, and there were large numbers of them.

The Castilians, seeing this assistance that good fortune offered them in

their necessity—because the caravels were already leaking, and they feared that they would continue to do so increasingly until they foundered, and as they did not know how much more navigation was before them or have any other hope of reaching Christian lands except by means of the brigantines—decided to repair them, since they had the means and a good beach where they could bring them ashore.

With this purpose they spent eight days at that place, and every day they unloaded a brigantine and pulled it ashore by main strength, pitched it, and launched it in the water again in the evening. To soften the bitumen, which was dry, they used the fat from the little bacon that they were bringing to eat, thinking it better to use it on the boats than for their own subsistence, for they knew that they would be the means of saving their lives.

XII

THE NAVIGATION CONTINUES TO ITS FIFTY-THIRD DAY, AND A STORM THAT OVERTOOK THEM

In the eight days that our people occupied in careening their boats, on three different occasions eight Indians came up to them, advancing peacefully, and gave them ears of maize or Indian corn of which they brought a large quantity, and the Spaniards gave them in return some of the deerskins that they had with them. Notwithstanding all these friendly exchanges between them, the Spaniards did not ask them what land that was, or the name of the province, for they had no other desire except to reach the territory of México; thus it is impossible for us to know what region that might have been. All three times the Indians came with their bows and arrows and showed themselves to be very friendly, and they were always the same ones.

After the eight days that they spent in pitching the caravels, our Castilians left that pleasant shore and beach and continued on their voyage, always taking care to go from one point of land to another, so that a north wind, such as those that blow very furiously at times on that coast, would not carry them to the high seas. They also did this because, as we have seen, they had to take water every three days.

Where they found a good place they busied themselves in fishing, for after they had repaired the caravels and used up their bacon they had nothing else to eat except maize. Forced by necessity, some of them fished in the

water with their hooks, and others went ashore to hunt for shellfish, and they always brought back a good supply. Also they were obliged to rest from their hard labor at the oars by fishing, because whenever the sea would permit, all those who were in the caravels, except the captains, took turns at them. They spent twelve or thirteen days from time to time in fishing, for wherever they found a good supply they stayed two or three days.

In this manner these Spaniards sailed many leagues (but we cannot say how many), with great eagerness to sight the Río de Palmas, which in view of the distance they had sailed it seemed to them could not be far away. Those who prided themselves on being cosmographers and expert mariners held out and affirmed this hope, but as a matter of fact the wisest among them did not know in what sea or what region they were navigating, except that it seemed undeniably true to them that by continuing their voyage from one cape to another they would reach the lands of México, unless the sea should devour them. This certainty was what gave them strength to suffer and endure the excessive hardships that they experienced.

Fifty-three days had passed since our Spaniards had left the Río Grande and entered the sea. They spent thirty of them in navigation and twenty-three in repairing the brigantines and in resting while they fished. On the last day the north wind rose after noon with the ferocity and force with which it blows on that coast, more than in any other place, and it blew them out to sea, which was what they had always feared.

Five of the caravels that were proceeding together, the governor's being among them, had seen the storm coming, and before it arrived they drew near the shore, and thus they navigated with their oars touching it, looking for a shelter where they could protect themselves from the bad weather. The other two caravels, which were those of the treasurer Juan Gaytán who had remained the sole captain of it after the death of the good Juan de Guzmán, and of Captains Juan de Alvarado and Cristóbal Mosquera, which had not observed the weather as closely as the other five, were some distance from the shore. Because of this carelessness they passed that whole night [in] a fierce storm, the force of the wind increasing hourly, so that they went with the Creed on their lips. The treasurer's caravel was in greater danger than the other, because a gust of wind displaced the mainmast and it came out of a wooden mortar in the keel in which it was encased, and they put it back in only with much labor and difficulty. Thus the two caravels struggled all night, forcing their way against the storm, so as not to get out of sight of land. At dawn (our people thought the wind would fall when daylight came) it blew even more furiously and strongly, and kept them on the point of

drowning without its force abating, until noon. At this hour the two caravels saw that the other five were ascending a creek or river and had now reached a safe place, free from that storm in which they were found. Thereupon they persisted anew in trying to go against the wind to see whether they could reach the place where the others were. But in spite of their efforts they could not do it because the wind blew directly against them and was extremely strong, so that all their attempts to reach the river failed. On the other hand their persistence placed them in greater danger, for the caravels were often on the point of capsizing, but still with all this they struggled against the storm until three o'clock in the afternoon. Seeing that their labors were not only useless but that their peril was increasing, they agreed that it would be less dangerous to allow themselves to run forward along the coast where they might find some help.

Having so decided, they steered the boats toward the west and sailed with a side wind, it not having abated for them at all.

Our Spaniards went without any clothing except trousers, because so much water from the waves fell on the caravels that it kept them half drowned. Some worked to trim the sails, and others to bail out the water, for, as the brigantines had no decks, all that the waves washed in remained, and our men walked in it thigh-deep.

XIII

A SEVERE STORM THAT THE TWO CARAVELS PASSED THROUGH, AND HOW THEY WERE CAST ASHORE

The two caravels ran through the storm for twenty-five or twenty-six hours, as we have said, without its abating in the least; on the contrary it seemed to those who were in it to be increasing hourly. All this time our Spaniards were battling the waves and the wind without sleeping or eating a mouthful, for the fear of death, which was so close to them, drove away hunger and sleep. Nearly at sunset they sighted land ahead, which was found to be of two kinds.

That which was seen ahead and extending to the right of the direction in which our people were going was a white coast that appeared to be of sand, because with the hard wind that was blowing they saw many hillocks of it moving easily and rapidly from one place to another. The coast that ex-

tended to their left appeared to be as black as pitch. At this moment a youth named Francisco, twenty years old, who was in the caravel of Captains Juan de Alvarado and Francisco Mosquera, said to them: "Sirs, I know this coast, for I have navigated along it twice while serving as cabin boy on a ship, though I do not know the land, nor whose it is. That black coast that appears on our left is a land of flint and a rough coast that extends a long way until it reaches La Vera Cruz. There is no port on the whole of it nor any haven where we can take shelter; there are only broken cliffs and flint promontories where, if we are cast ashore, we shall all die, pounded to pieces between the waves and the rocks.

"The other land that is ahead extending to the right is a sandy coast and therefore appears white. It is all clear and smooth and thus it will be well for us to endeavor to reach this white coast before night comes on, because if the wind separates us from it and casts us on the black coast we have no hope left of escaping alive."

Captains Juan de Alvarado and Francisco Mosquera ordered that notice be given immediately to Captain Juan Gaytán's caravel of the information given by the youth Francisco, so as to warn them against the impending danger, but the waves were so high that they would not permit those of the two caravels talking to or even seeing each other. They made themselves understood as well as they could by signs, however, and by shouts given at intervals now and again as the caravels happened to come in sight over the waves so that they could see and talk with one another. They agreed by common consent to run ashore on the white coast. Only the treasurer Juan Gaytán, acting in his capacity as treasurer rather than as captain, opposed it, saying that it was not well to lose the caravel, which was valuable. At his words, the soldiers rose up and said all together: "What more do you have in it than any one of us? On the contrary you have less, or nothing at all, for presuming on your position as the emperor's treasurer you would not cut the wood or dress it, or make charcoal for the forges, or help there to beat the iron into nails, or work at the caulking, or at anything else of importance. You evaded all the labor that we endured under pretext of your royal office. This being so, what will you lose if the caravel is lost? Will it be better to lose the fifty men that are in it?" And there was not lacking someone who said, "It is a pity that he who gave you this stab in the neck did not cut it all the way across!"

Having spoken thus very freely, in order to prevent any reply being made or the captain presuming to give orders at that juncture, the chief soldiers busied themselves in trimming the sails, and a Portuguese named Domingos

de Acosta grasped the rudder or helm, and they all turned the prow of the boat toward the shore. They made ready with their swords and shields for whatever they might find there, and tacking from side to side so as not to fall upon the black coast, they made the white coast with much danger and labor a little before the sun went down.

Because we mentioned the sword-wound of the treasurer Juan Gaytán, it will be well, though it has nothing to do with our *History*, to tell here how the incident happened. For this purpose it must be known that our Juan Gaytán was the nephew of the captain Juan Gaytán who, because of the marvelous exploits he performed in all parts with his sword and cape, won renown for his excellence in the proverb, "The sword and cape of Juan Gaytán." This one, his nephew, took part in the war in Tunis when our lord the emperor took it from the Turk Barbarossa in the year 1535 and gave it to the Moor Muley Hacen, who was his friend. In a quarrel over the division of the spoils Juan Gaytán had taken in that sack, he exchanged thrusts with another Spanish soldier whose sword must not have been inferior to that of his uncle. This man gave him a deep wound in the neck from which he nearly died. Finally he recovered, but he was left with a scar two finger-breadths deep. One of those who came up to pacify the quarrel reproached the one who had wounded him, saying that he had done ill in so mistreating the nephew of Captain Juan Gaytán; that he ought to have respected him because of his uncle's reputation. The soldier, unrepentant for his action, replied: "It is too bad that he was not the nephew of the king of France; I would have taken even more pleasure in having wounded or killed him, because it would have meant so much more honor and fame for me." The treasurer Juan Gaytán himself told this as a witty saying of the person who had wounded him.

XIV

WHAT THE CAPTAINS AND SOLDIERS OF THE TWO CARAVELS ORDERED

Returning to our story, it happened that Captain Juan Gaytán, feeling that the caravel had touched bottom, either because of his anger at the opposition the soldiers had made to him, or because he thought he knew from experience that in such situations it was less dangerous to enter the water by

way of the stern rather than any other part of the boat, threw himself from it into the water. On coming up, his back struck against the rudder, and as he wore no clothes, he was badly hurt and wounded. All the rest of the soldiers stayed aboard the caravel. The first time it struck the shore, since the waves were so large, it was left more than ten paces beyond the water when they receded back to the sea. But when the waves returned to the combat they turned it on its side.

Those who were on it at once jumped into the water, as they wore no clothing to prevent their moving about in it. Some went on one side and others on the other to right the caravel and turn it so that the force of the waves would not sink it. Others busied themselves in unloading the maize and taking out the cargo. Others carried this ashore. With such activity they had it entirely unloaded within a very short time, and as it was now light they easily got it ashore, aided by the blows of the waves against it. They lifted it almost entirely from the ground and shored it so as to be able to launch it again if it should be necessary.

The same thing that happened to the caravel of the treasurer Juan Gaytán occurred also in that of Captains Juan de Alvarado and Cristóbal Mosquera, which was grounded at a distance of about two harquebus-shots from the other one. Its company unloaded it with the same rapidity and diligence and brought it ashore. The captains and soldiers, finding themselves free of the storm and the perils of the sea, immediately sent to visit one another to find out what had happened during their shipwreck. The messengers started out at the same moment, as if by agreement, and they met in the middle of the road. Exchanging their messages, questions, and replies, they both returned to their companions with a good report of everything. At this both parties rejoiced greatly and gave thanks to God for having saved them from so much hardship and danger. But not knowing what had happened to the governor and the rest of their companions gave them new cause for anxiety and care, for it is characteristic of human nature that we have scarcely emerged from one misery when we find ourselves in another.

To discuss what they ought to do in that necessity, the three captains and the chief soldiers of both caravels met at once, and all of them agreed that it would be well for some diligent soldier to go immediately that night to find out about the governor and the caravels that they had seen ascending that creek or river, and tell him what had happened to the two brigantines. But considering the excessive labors that they had undergone during the storm, and that for more than twenty-eight hours since it began they had not eaten or slept, and that since coming out of the sea they still had not rested even

half an hour, they did not dare name anyone to go. For it seemed to them a great cruelty to choose him for further labor, and no less reckless to send him when he [would be] in such manifest danger of perishing on the way, because on that same night he would have to travel thirteen or fourteen leagues that apparently lay between them and the place where they had seen the caravels going inland. He would have to go through an unknown country, ignorant of whether there were other rivers or creeks on the road or whether it was safe from enemies, because, as has been said, they did not know in what region they were.

The confusion of our captains and soldiers and the difficulties of the proposed hardships and dangers were overcome by the generous and courageous spirit of Gonzalo Quadrado Xaramillo, whom we mentioned particularly on the day of the great battle of Mauvila. Standing before his companions, he said: "Notwithstanding our past hardships and those in prospect at present, along with imminent risk to my life, I offer to make this journey out of the love that I have for the general, because I am his countryman, and in order to bring you out of your present perplexity. I propose to travel all night and not to stop until I reach the governor in the morning, or die in the attempt. If there is anyone who wishes to do so, he may go with me, otherwise I say that I shall go alone."

The captains and soldiers were very gratified to see his good spirit, which was matched by that of another valiant Castilian, named Francisco Muñoz, a native of Burgos. Stepping out from among his companions and placing himself at the side of Gonzalo Quadrado Xaramillo he said that he would accompany him on that journey, whether he lived or died. Immediately, without any delay, they gave them some small knapsacks containing a little maize and bacon, both poorly cooked, because they had not even had time to cook it well. With this fine preparation and equipped with their swords and shields, and barefoot, as we have said all of them were, these two courageous soldiers set out at one o'clock that night. They marched all night with the seashore for their guide, because they knew of no other road. We shall leave them there to tell what their companions were doing meanwhile.

As soon as the two soldiers had been sent off, the others returned to their caravels and slept in them with sentries posted because they did not know whether they were in the land of enemies or of friends. As soon as it was light, they assembled again and chose three corporals, each of whom was to go with twenty men in a different direction to explore and see what land that might be. They were called corporals and not captains because of the few men they had with them. One of them was named Antonio de Porras, who

went forward along the coast to the south; another, who was named Alonso Calvete, went north along the same coast; and Gonzalo Silvestre went inland toward the west. All carried orders that they were not to go very far so that those who stayed behind could help them if they should need it. Each of them went with a great desire of bringing good news.

XV

WHAT HAPPENED TO THE THREE EXPLORING CAPTAINS

The captains who went in either direction along the coast, each having marched more than a league over it, returned to their people. One party brought half of a white earthen plate, of the very fine sort that is made in Talavera, and the others brought a broken crock of gilded and painted earthenware such as is made in Malasa [Málaga?]. They said that they had not found anything else, and that these were very good signs and indications of their being in a Spanish country, for both pieces of earthenware were from Spain and were a proof of their statement. All our people rejoiced greatly at this and were extremely happy, holding these signs to be certain and propitious, according to their desires.

Gonzalo Silvestre and his party, who went into the interior, were more fortunate. Having advanced a little more than a quarter of a league from the sea and crossed over a little hill, they saw a lagoon of fresh water that extended for more than a league. On it were four or five canoes of Indians who were fishing, and so that the Indians would not see them and raise an alarm the Spaniards got behind some trees and marched through them a quarter of a league parallel with the lagoon, spread out in a line as if they were hunting hares. They advanced in this manner, looking carefully and attentively on all sides. They saw two Indians ahead (about the distance of two harquebus-shots from where they were going) who were gathering fruit under a large tree called a *guayavo* in the language of the island of Española and *savintu* in my language of El Perú.

When the Spaniards saw them they passed the word along to drop down on the ground so as not to be seen, and gave orders to surround them, some on one side and some on the other. They were to go like lizards, crawling along the ground, and encircle the Indians so they could not get away, and those who stayed behind were not to raise up from the ground until the ones ahead had got on the other side of the Indians.

With these orders they all went with their chests to the ground, and the ones ahead went on all fours almost three harquebus-shots to come in ahead of the Indians. Each one of the Spaniards was put on his honor not to let the quarry get past him. When they had them surrounded all raised up at the same time and charged at them, but for all their trouble one of the Indians got away, jumped into the water, and escaped by swimming.

The Indian who remained a captive shouted loudly, repeating many times the word *brezos*. The Spaniards, in their haste to return to their people before the Indians should come to take away their prisoner, paid no attention to what the Indian was saying, but were concerned only with leaving that place quickly. They hastily picked up the two baskets of guayavas that the Indians had gathered, and a little maize that they found in a hut, and a turkey such as are found in México—which they do not have in El Perú—and a cock and two hens like those of Spain, and a small quantity of conserve made from the prickly leaves of a tree called maguey, which are like the spikes of a thistle. The Indians of New Spain make many things from this tree, such as wine, vinegar, and syrup made from a sweet liquor that the leaves yield when taken from the stalk at a certain time of the year. The tender spikes when cooked and put in the sun are good to eat and similar in appearance to preserved pumpkin, though they do not equal its flavor. Of these same spikes, which are like those of a thistle, when they mature on the tree, the Indians make a fiber that is very strong and good. The maguey stalk, only one of which grows on each plant after the manner of the giant fennel of Spain, and which has a spongy wood like it though the outside is hard, they use to roof their houses where better wood is lacking.

The Castilians took with them everything we have said they found in the hut, and they took the captured Indian well bound so that he would not escape them. They questioned him by signs and with Spanish words, asking him what land this was and what his name was. The Indian understood from the gestures they made to him, as if he were mute, that they were questioning him, but he did not understand from their words what they were asking him. Not knowing how to reply, he repeated the word *brezos*, and many times; pronouncing it badly, he said "*bredos*."

As he did not answer to the purpose, the Spaniards said to him: "Go to the devil, you dog, what would we want with *bledos* [amaranth]?" The Indian was trying to say that he was the vassal of a Spaniard named Cristóbal de Brezos, and as in his disturbed state he could not manage to say Cristóbal, and sometimes said *brezos* and again *bredos*, the Castilians could not understand him. Thus they carried him off hurriedly, before he should be taken

away from them, in order to ask him later at more leisure the things they wished to find out.

In connection with the Spaniards' questionings and the Indian's unintelligible replies (because they did not understand one another), we had inserted here the derivation of the name *Perú*, which those Indians do not have in their language. It came from another such incident as this, and inasmuch as the printing of this book has been delayed longer than I had ever imagined, I took it away from here and put it in its proper place [a reference to Garcilaso's *Commentarios Reales*]. There it will be found in full along with many other names included by way of illustration, because, by Divine favor, in this year 1602 we are now in the last quarter of it and expect to finish it speedily.

XVI

THE SPANIARDS LEARN THAT THEY ARE IN THE TERRITORY OF MÉXICO

Gonzalo Silvestre and the twenty men of his party, along with the Indian whom they had captured, traveled swiftly. They asked questions that were poorly understood by the Indian, and his replies were worse interpreted by the Spaniards. Thus they marched until they reached the coast, where the rest of their companions were holding a great celebration and rejoicing over the pieces of the plate and crock that the other explorers had brought back. But as soon as they saw the turkey and the hens and the fruit and the rest of the loot that Gonzalo Silvestre and his men carried they could not restrain themselves from making signs of extreme joy, jumping and leaping like crazy men. For the greater satisfaction of all of them it happened that the surgeon who had treated them had been in México and knew something about the Mexican language. He spoke to the Indian in it, saying, "What are these?" and indicating some scissors that he had in his hand.

Having recognized that these people were Spaniards, the Indian had now come to himself somewhat and replied in Spanish, "*Tiselas*" [*tiseras*, or in modern Spanish, *tijeras*: scissors]. This word, though badly pronounced proved conclusively to our men that they were in the territory of México, and in their joy at learning it they insisted on embracing and congratulating Gonzalo Silvestre and the members of his party, and they raised them up on

their shoulders and marched around with them, extolling and praising them without stint or restraint, as if every one of them had brought the seigniorship of México and its whole empire.

This most solemn festival of rejoicing having passed, they questioned the Indian more quietly and to better purpose, asking what land that was and what river or creek the governor had entered with the five caravels.

The Indian said: "This land belongs to the city of Pánuco and your captain-general entered the Río de Pánuco, which flows into the sea twelve leagues from here. The city is twelve leagues farther up the river, and it is ten leagues from here by land. I am a vassal of a vecino of Pánuco named Cristóbal de Brezos, and about a league from here is an Indian lord of vassals who knows how to read and write, having been brought up from infancy by the priest who instructs us in the Christian doctrine. If you wish that I go summon him, I will go for him; I know he will come at once and will inform you about everything that you wish to know most."

The Spaniards were very pleased with the Indian's intelligent remarks and they entertained him and gave him presents from the things they had with them. They sent him immediately for the cacique and directed him to bring or send a supply of paper and ink for writing.

The Indian traveled with such haste and diligence that he came back with the curaca in less than four hours. The latter, learning that some Spanish ships had been stranded in his country, desired to visit them personally and carry them some present. Thus he brought eight Indians laden with chickens like those of Spain, and bread made of maize, and fruit and fish, as well as ink and paper, because he prided himself on being able to read and write and considered it a great accomplishment.

He presented everything he brought to the Spaniards and very affectionately offered them his person and his house. Our men thanked him for his visit and for the presents, and gave him in return some of the deerskins that they brought. They immediately dispatched an Indian to the governor with a letter in which they told him everything that had happened to them up to that time, and asked him for orders as to their future actions.

The cacique remained with the Spaniards all that day, questioning them about the events and adventures of their discovery, being very pleased to hear of them. He wondered at seeing them so black, spare, and worn in their persons and clothing, which showed clearly the hardships they had endured. When it was nearly night he returned to his house, and in the six days that the Spaniards stayed on that beach he visited them every day, always bringing them presents of the things that were in his country.